

A Review of the 113th Congress

With only three scheduled days left on the legislative calendar, there is still more work to be done before Congress adjourns for the year. By the end of this week, Congress must pass an omnibus spending bill to fund the entire government and avoid another harmful, costly government shutdown, as well as pass a long-term, multi-year extension of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act to provide businesses with the economic certainty they need to invest in creating more jobs here at home. In addition to these time-sensitive legislative priorities that are still awaiting action, there are a number of other critical issues the Republican-led Congress failed to act on these past two years. As the House wraps up its last scheduled week of session for the year, here's a look back at the 113th Congress:

The 113th Congress has been the most unproductive, most closed Congress in modern history:

- Including the three scheduled remaining legislative days this week, the House will have **only been in session for 239 days this Congress**.
- **Only 201 bills have been signed into law this Congress, only 32 of which were major pieces of legislation** – significantly fewer than previous Congresses: 284 laws during the 112th Congress, 385 laws during the 111th Congress, 460 laws during the 110th Congress, and 483 laws during the 109th Congress.
- Despite promises of increased transparency, **the Republican-led House set a record for number of closed rules – 83** – which blocked Members from offering amendments on legislation and limited debate.
- **House Republicans also broke their own three-day pledge 18 times** by bringing legislation to the Floor for a vote before text had been available for 72 hours.

House Republicans continued to add to their record of obstruction and partisanship:

- In October of 2013, House Republicans led a **16-day government shutdown that cost the U.S. economy approximately \$24 billion and furloughed millions of federal employees**.
- House Republicans twice **issued demands, in February and October 2013, that major policy concessions be made in order for America to continue paying its bills on time, while contending that a default on our obligations would have no consequences to the economy despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary**.
- Since they took the Majority, House Republicans have wasted time and taxpayer dollars by **voting over 50 times to undermine or repeal the consumer protections, financial assistance, and expanded coverage options provided by the Affordable Care Act**.
- In May, House Republicans **politicized a national tragedy by establishing a partisan select committee on Benghazi, in spite of the fact that it had already been thoroughly investigated**. By the end of this year, the select committee will have spent \$1 million in taxpayer dollars.

- In June, House Republicans **voted to authorize a \$350,000 lawsuit against the President**, even though the majority of Americans considered the lawsuit a political stunt.
- The American people are taking notice; “A plurality of Americans believes that causing political problems for President Obama is now the GOP's top priority in Washington.” [National Journal, [10/1/13](#)]

House Republicans voted against the issues that the majority of Americans support:

On Jobs and the Economy: “*The economy and the availability of good jobs tops the list of voters’ priorities among both parties.*” [The Hill, [10/9/14](#)]

- But House Republicans **voted against bills to promote private sector hiring and expand economic opportunity**, including Bring Jobs Home Act [9/18/14, 7/30/14, 9/18/13], Make It In America Manufacturing Act of 2013 [10/29/13], Invest in American Jobs Act [7/17/13], Security in Energy and Manufacturing Act [5/16/13], American Textile Technology Innovation and Research for Exportation [11/18/14], and Put America Back to Work Act [4/24/13].
- House Republicans **instead wasted time passing special interest giveaway legislation disguised as “jobs” bills that actually did nothing to create jobs.**

On Fiscal Responsibility: *House Republicans promised to “curb Washington’s spending habits and promote job creation, bring down the deficit, and build long-term fiscal stability.”* [[Pledge to America](#)]

- But House Republicans **reported fourteen tax extender bills out of committee without any offsets, which would have added \$824.8 billion to the deficit.**
- House Republicans also **voted to adopt the “dynamic scoring” gimmick to cover up a \$1.2 trillion deficit in their budget, rather than make the tough choices necessary to prioritize.** [4/4/14]
- House Republicans also **refused to work with House Democrats to replace the sequester in a balanced way**, allowing the arbitrary, across-the-board spending cuts to go into effect. [2/1/13]
- 151 House Republicans also **voted against preventing the fiscal cliff from severely damaging the economy**, and GOP leadership relied on 172 Democrats to pass the bill. [1/1/13]

On Immigration: “*A plurality of Americans believes immigration is the most important problem facing the U.S... Seventeen percent of Americans think immigration is the country’s biggest problem*” [Politico, [7/16/14](#)]

- **But over 500 days since the Senate passed comprehensive immigration reform legislation with strong bipartisan support, House Republicans still have yet to act to fix a system that everyone agrees is broken.**
- House Republicans **voted against H.R. 15, a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill introduced by Democrats, three times in one week.** [8/1/14, 8/1/14, 7/31]
- In addition to not putting comprehensive immigration reform legislation on the Floor for a vote, House Republicans also **moved backward on immigration reform by voting 3 times for draconian legislation that would target children** brought to the U.S. through no fault of their own [3/13/14, 3/12/14, 6/6/13]

On Equal Pay: *Seventy-four percent of people support “government efforts to address male-female income disparity in the United States.” [Politico, [May 2014](#)]*

- But House Republicans **voted three times against the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 377) to secure equal pay for equal work** [9/18/14, 7/30/14, 4/8/14].

On Minimum Wage: *“Seventy-one percent of people surveyed favor a hike in the federal minimum wage,” including 54% of Republicans. [CNN-Money, [6/9/14](#)]*

- But House Republicans **voted seven times against increasing the federal minimum wage for employees to \$10.10 an hour, which would give 25 million American workers a raise and help boost our economy** [9/18/14, 7/30/14, 4/29/14, 4/4/14, 4/2/14, 2/27/14, 2/26/14].

On Emergency Unemployment Insurance: *“Sixty-nine percent of people think the insurance should last at least a year — longer than the current 26 weeks.” [Washington Post, [1/23/14](#)]*

- But House Republicans **voted six times against extending emergency unemployment assistance to millions of Americans who lost their jobs** [1/15/14, 1/28/14, 3/6/14, 3/5/14, 5/7/14, 4/8/14].

On Education: *Eighty-one percent of Americans said it was “extremely/very important” that the president and Congress deal with education, coming in second as the top priority issue only behind the economy. [Gallup, [1/16/14](#)]*

- But House Republicans passed their harmful budget that would disinvest in education by **cutting early childhood education by \$19 billion, K-12 education by \$89 billion, higher education by \$260 billion (including \$145 billion in cuts to Pell grants), and reducing the number of new grant opportunities.**
- House Republicans **pursued a partisan strategy that led to the doubling of student loan interest rates** on July 1, 2013.

On the Environment: *Sixty-nine percent agree that “global warming, also known as climate change, is a serious problem facing this country” and 57 percent called it a “very serious problem.” [Washington Post/ABC News Poll, [6/8/14](#)]*

- But House Republicans **cast their 500th anti-environmental vote** in June 2014 since taking control of the House in 2011.
- In the 113th Congress alone, House Republicans have taken 234 anti-environment votes, including **16 votes benefitting the coal industry, 40 votes benefitting the oil and natural gas industry, 9 votes benefitting the mining industry, 17 votes to block the deployment of renewable electricity, renewable fuels or energy efficiency, and 33 votes to benefit “special interests.”**

When the 114th Congress convenes in January, House Democrats will continue to urge House Republicans to listen to the majority of Americans and take action on these important issues. Instead of wasting time and taxpayer dollars on partisan legislation and obstructing progress, there are significant opportunities for both parties to work together to achieve real results on the issues that matter most. Next year, Republicans will control both chambers of Congress, and they will have a responsibility to govern responsibly and work with Democrats on behalf of the American people.

Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 12/09/14